

February 10, 2015

SENATE JUDICIARY	
Exhibit No.	18
Date	2/10/15
File No.	SB202

TO: Montana Senate Judiciary Committee
RE: Senate Bill 202

Dear Senators,

I am asking you to oppose SB 202.

I am a family practice physician in Great Falls, Montana who regularly sees patients from the very young to the elderly, including those who may have a terminal illness. Why should this bill be opposed?

1. Doctors are notoriously poor at estimating how long patients have left to live. A patient may commit suicide with legal approval through an error of diagnosis and prognosis. This bill allows a doctor to bypass a 2nd opinion.
2. Physician assisted suicide (PAS) is not a currently acceptable medical treatment nor is it taught in medical school.
3. It puts the public at risk by increasing the chance of elder abuse. There are many ways in which coercion and subtle pressure could be used.
4. It is unethical. As the AMA Code of Medical Ethics states in Opinion 2.211, "...However, allowing physicians to participate in assisted suicide would cause more harm than good. Physician assisted suicide is fundamentally incompatible with the physician's role as healer, would be difficult or impossible to control, and would pose serious societal risks..."
5. Treatable depression is likely to be missed or undiagnosed
6. We have legal, acceptable ways of treating patients' pain and suffering through palliative care, hospice, and palliative sedation. Intentional death is not needed.
7. Our rate of suicide is likely to increase with tacit approval of PAS, just as it has in Oregon since PAS was legally approved there.

Thank you for considering your opposition to this bill.

Sincerely,



Craig Treptow MD
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